MULTI AWARD WINNING!

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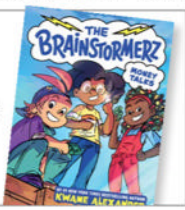
THE WORLD'S BEST NEWS & FACTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

ALL ABOUT
World Cup action set to begin
p12

READING
New book by Kwame Alexander
p22



ANIMALS
Scientists study why cows burp
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June 12, 2026 • Vol. 7, Issue 321 • $5.99

Making sense of the world

THE WEEK Junior

THE BEST MAGAZINE FOR CURIOUS KIDS

WORD WINNER

California teen Shrey Parikh earns a dramatic victory in this year's Scripps National Spelling Bee p2

Shrey Parikh holding the Scripps Cup after his win

FAMILY TIES
Two sets of siblings have won the bee: brothers Sriram and Jairam Hathwar (in 2014 and 2016) and sisters Kavya and Vanya Shivashankar (in 2009 and 2015).

Spell-off words

moorhen
abseil
bromocriptine

This year's bee included the third spell-off in the contest's history. In 2022, Harini Logan spelled 22 out of 26 words correctly, winning with "moorhen," a type of bird. In 2024, Bruhat Soma spelled 29 out of 30 words, winning with "abseil," a mountain-climbing maneuver. Shrey Parikh won with "bromocriptine," a chemical compound.

Spelling bee winner sets record

Shrey Parikh, a 14-year-old from California, won the Scripps National Spelling Bee on May 28. The event was held in Washington, DC, for the first time in 15 years and was broadcast on TV.

What is the bee?

The Scripps National Spelling Bee, open to students who have not finished eighth grade and have not turned 16, is the nation's biggest spelling competition. It has been held every year since 1925, except from 1943–1945 due to World War II and in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At the event, each competitor steps up to a microphone and listens while an announcer says a word out loud. The speller must repeat the word back, pronouncing it accurately, and can ask for its definition, part of speech, and language of origin. They can also ask to hear it used in a sentence. Then they have 90 seconds to spell the word out loud. They stay in the bee if they spell it correctly or are eliminated if they do not. Jacques Bailly, a former bee champion, has been the event's head pronouncer since 2003, and Mary Brooks has served as head judge since 2005. This year, ESPN reporter Mina Kimes, who was a spelling bee champion as a child, hosted the event for the first time.

Ishaan Gupta, who came in second place

How does the competition work?

More than 10 million students compete in classroom spelling bees from September through December. From there they advance to county or district, regional, and statewide spelling bees. Finalists then head to the Scripps National Spelling Bee for a week of events known as Bee Week, followed by four rounds of competition. This year, 247 spellers competed at nationals, which were held at Constitution Hall. In 2021, two new elements were added to the final rounds. The first is a vocabulary round, which reinforces the bee's goal of cultivating literacy and word knowledge. The second is the spell-off, which occurs if no one has taken the top prize within a set period of time. During a spell-off, competitors try to correctly spell as many words as possible in 90 seconds. Whoever spells the most words wins. The final word they spell correctly is considered their winning word. (For more on spell-offs, see the box above.)

Who is Shrey Parikh?

Parikh, an eighth grader in San Bernardino, California, previously competed at the National Spelling Bee in 2022, when he placed 89th, and in 2024, when he tied for third place. He competed in school-level bees in 2025 but was eliminated early due to an illness. Parikh says he practiced spelling for five hours a day and that his favorite word is "muntjac," which is a type of deer in southeast Asia. He also participates in math competitions, plays tennis and chess, is an avid reader, and plays the timpani and other instruments in the school band. For winning the bee, Parikh received a $52,500 cash prize, a medal, the Scripps Cup trophy, and a trip to Universal Orlando.

What happened in the final round?

Nine people made it to the finals this year, including Zwe Spacetime, whose older sister Zaila Avant-garde won the bee in 2021. After nine rounds that took more than three hours, the competition ended in a spell-off between Parikh and 12-year-old Ishaan Gupta from New Jersey. Parikh correctly spelled 32 words, a new record in the spell-off, while Gupta spelled 25. Sarv Dharavane finished in third place for the second straight year. Parikh, who held the trophy above his head after he won, said, "I was so nervous for every word, but I just reminded myself that I needed to trust my instincts."

What will happen next?

Schools can start enrolling in next year's spelling bee program on August 18. This was Parikh's final year of eligibility, but he said he hopes to stay involved in competitive spelling, possibly by coaching or working for Scripps.

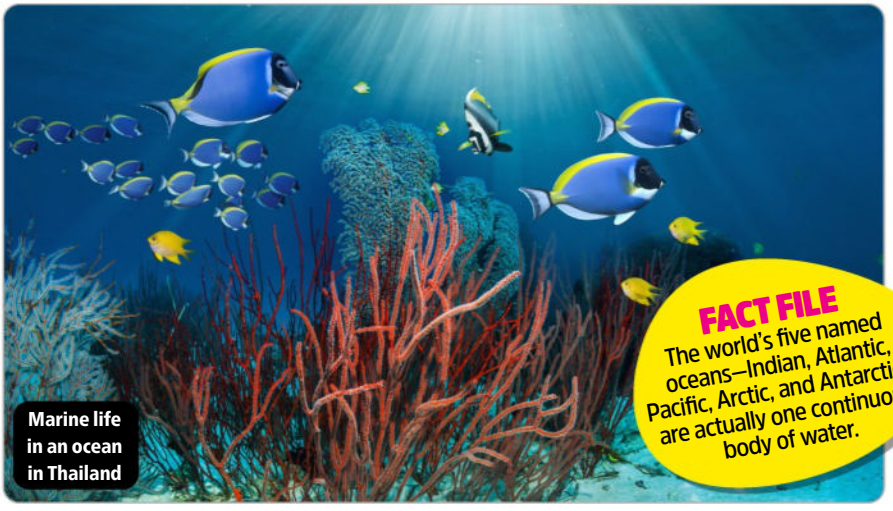
Partial internet restored in Iran

On May 27, the government of Iran said it was restoring internet access after imposing a near-total blackout for about 90 million people for 88 days. The shutdown, which began in February after the US and Israel attacked Iran, was one of the world's longest internet blackouts. Citizens could only access a few authorized websites and apps.

Iranian leaders said the move was for "national security," but critics said it was to censor speech and information. Iran is controlled by authoritarian leaders who impose strict laws and punish people who criticize the government. Internet access was already limited before the war and was briefly suspended in January, after millions of citizens participated in anti-government protests.

The latest shutdown prevented Iranians from connecting with the outside world, left many unable to work, and cost businesses up to $40 million a day. When *The Week Junior* went to press on June 3, reports said most people were still without full internet access. Meanwhile, the US and Iran were working to negotiate a peace deal.

Women in Iran


Marine life in an ocean in Thailand

FACT FILE
The world's five named oceans—Indian, Atlantic, Pacific, Arctic, and Antarctic—are actually one continuous body of water.

World Oceans Day observed

On June 8, people around the world will observe United Nations World Oceans Day, an annual event created to inspire action for ocean conservation and awareness. This year's theme is "Reimagine: Beyond the world we know, a new relationship with our ocean."

The United Nations (UN, a group of 193 countries) first designated June 8 as World Oceans Day in 2008. For this year's event, organizers are celebrating the signing of a global treaty that protects parts of the ocean that are not covered by any specific country's laws.

Marine law expert Judith Swan first proposed the idea for World Oceans Day in 1992 to recognize the vital role oceans play on Earth. They provide a crucial habitat for millions of species, help regulate the climate, and generate oxygen. More than 3 billion people rely on the oceans for food and income.

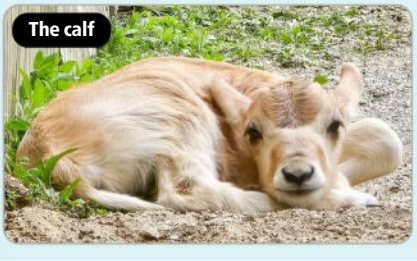
Despite their importance, oceans are facing many serious threats. Climate change is warming waters, altering ecosystems and triggering more powerful storms. Plastic waste is also a growing problem, further threatening marine health.

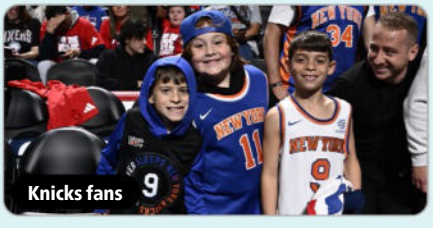
Museums and institutions around the US will mark the day this year. In New York City, the New York Aquarium is holding an Ocean Shell-a-bration Weekend with a dig for artifacts, and a nonprofit called Peace Boat will hold a gala event. The National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC, will offer interactive experiences, including an exploration of organisms that live on coral reefs. Globally, events range from a festival in Mexico to an art exhibition in Hong Kong.

IT'S AN AMAZING WEEK FOR...

AN EXCITING ARRIVAL

An addax antelope calf was born at the Blank Park Zoo in Iowa, providing hope for her critically endangered species. Named Victoria, she loves to run around in the morning before finding a quiet place to nap, zoo staff said.


The calf

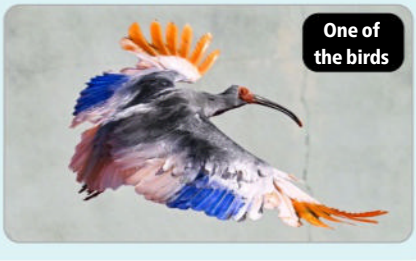

Knicks fans

SPECIAL SEATS

The New York Knicks are in the NBA Finals for the first time in 27 years, and the cost of game tickets has soared to between $5,000 and $260,000. With prices so high, the team is giving away hundreds of tickets to kids to ensure that "the next generation of fans can be part of the story."

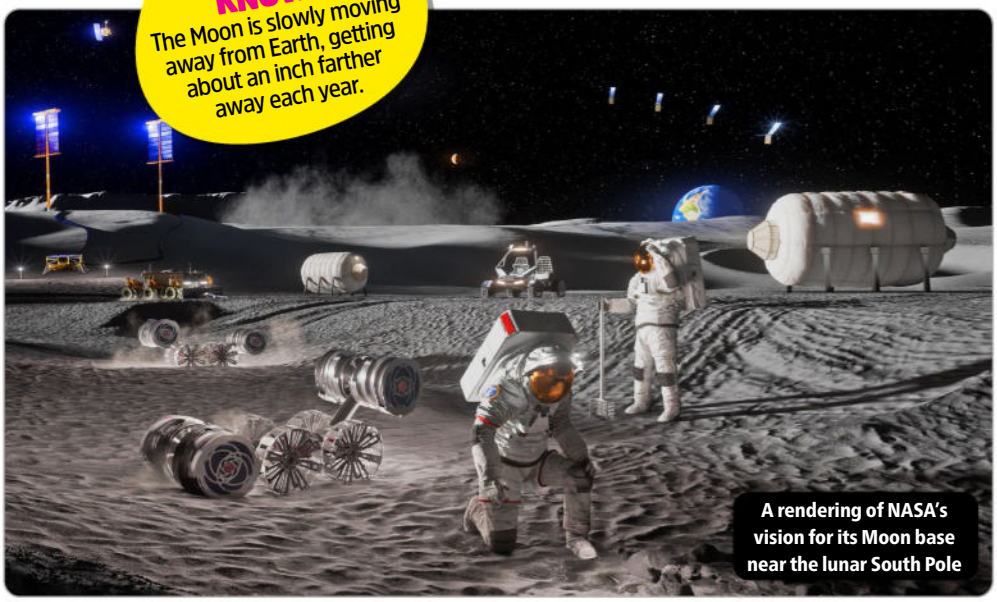
TAKING FLIGHT

Eight crested ibises were released into the wild on the island of Honshu, in Japan, where the birds have been extinct for nearly 60 years. Conservation experts raised the birds, called "toki" in Japanese, in captivity. They were released at a special ceremony attended by the country's crown prince and princess.


One of the birds

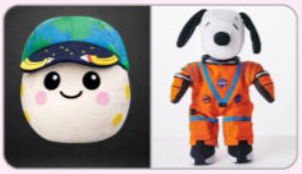
ON THE COVER: E. M. PIO RODA/SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE; FIFA; GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY THE PUBLISHER; ON THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3); BLANK PARK ZOO; AP; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (2)

DID YOU KNOW?
The Moon is slowly moving away from Earth, getting about an inch farther away each year.



A rendering of NASA's vision for its Moon base near the lunar South Pole

Two traveling plushies



Rise (left), a plushie that traveled on the Artemis II mission to the Moon in April and indicated when the crew had reached weightlessness, was created by Lucas Ye, age 8, of California. Ye was invited to the Charles M. Schulz Museum to see the Snoopy Zero Gravity Indicator (right), which served the same purpose for Artemis I in 2022.

NASA reveals plans for Moon base

The US space agency, NASA, has announced the first phase of its plans to create a base on the Moon as part of its Artemis program. At the same time, a rocket accident occurred that could affect the program's timeline.

What is the Moon base?

Artemis is a multi-mission human spaceflight project to explore more of the Moon. The base is planned as a temporary structure that would allow astronauts to live and work there while they establish a permanent human presence on the South Pole of the lunar surface.

What did NASA announce?

The space agency said on May 26 that it will provide hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts to four US aerospace companies: Blue Origin, Astrolab, Lunar Outpost, and Firefly Aerospace. The companies will build equipment and develop technology to support Artemis. Blue Origin will build two robotic landers that will deliver vehicles, built by Astrolab and Lunar Outpost, to the Moon. Firefly Aerospace will create drones for the Moon base. This equipment is meant to arrive before the Artemis IV mission, which aims to land astronauts on the Moon and could happen as early as 2028.

What was the rocket accident?

On May 28, Blue Origin's New Glenn rocket exploded on its launchpad in Cape Canaveral, Florida, during an engine-firing test. No one was injured, but the rocket and the launchpad were destroyed. Blue Origin had previously said it would use New Glenn to deliver its landers to the Moon base. The company had begun building a second launchpad prior to the accident, but that work is in its early stages. As a result, the explosion has led to uncertainty about Blue Origin meeting its deadlines for NASA.

What will happen next?

Crews are cleaning up debris from the rocket explosion and working to assess how long it might take to reconstruct the launchpad. NASA will continue with preparations for its upcoming Artemis III mission, which has a goal of launching astronauts into space in 2027. On June 9, the agency will announce the astronauts who will make up the Artemis III crew.

WORD OF THE WEEK

JAYWALKING

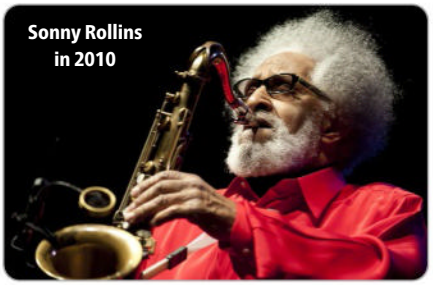
In the early 1900s, the word "jay" was a term for a foolish person, borrowed from the jaybird, whose loud squawks gave it an unfair reputation of not being smart. In cities, "jay" began to be used for people from the country who wandered carelessly into streets busy with cars. These people were called "jaywalkers" because they didn't pay enough attention.

THE WEEK IN HISTORY

June 12, 1939
Baseball Hall of Fame opens

On June 12, 1939, the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum opened in Cooperstown, New York. The city was chosen for the site because it was thought to be where baseball was first played, although that was later disproven. About 10,000 people attended the opening, which included inducting the first players, Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, and Cy Young, into the Hall, which today has 354 elected members.

Opening day in 1939


Sonny Rollins in 2010

Jazz legend is remembered

Sonny Rollins, a famous jazz musician who played the tenor saxophone, died on May 25 at age 95. Rollins grew up in New York City and collaborated with jazz icons like Miles Davis. He released more than 60 albums and was known for his innovative approach to music, winning two Grammy Awards and a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. "Every time I pick up the horn, I want to hear something fresh," he once said of his work.

Hacky sacks

Hacky sack soars in popularity

Stores are reporting a shortage of the crocheted bean bags used for hacky sack, a popular foot game. The shortage is due to sudden demand. Hacky sack, which can be played alone or with others, became well known in the US in the 1970s and again in the 1990s. According to the latest Google Trends report, searches for hacky sacks increased more than 5,000% in the past month.

Bookmarks for nation's 250th

The winners of the Bookmark Design Challenge: Celebrating America's 250th, a contest for students in grades K–8, were announced by Second Lady Usha Vance, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. Honorees included Iris Zhang, a first grader from California; Margaret McCaul, a third grader from Florida; and Eden Pethel, an eighth grader from Georgia.

Eden Pethel's bookmark

WOW! The largest rainbow Pride flag ever displayed stretched 1.25 miles across Key West, Florida, in 2003 and was carried by 2,000 volunteers.

People marching in the Boise Pride Festival parade in Idaho in 2025

Pride Month celebrated across US

The US kicked off Pride Month on June 1. The month celebrates and advocates for fair treatment of people in the LGBTQ+ community.

The first Pride march took place in June 1970. It marked the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising, a major event in New York City that caused people to come together to advocate for the civil rights of LGBTQ+ people. In 1978, the rainbow Pride flag was created for the Gay Freedom Day Parade in San Francisco, California. Since then, rainbow flags have become a symbol of the movement. Bill Clinton was the first US President to recognize Pride Month in 1999.

Rainbow flags show support.

Pride events are being held across the US, and some events have already taken place. Many colleges, such as Penn State University in Pennsylvania and Rutgers University in New Jersey, celebrated Pride Month in April when students were on campus, rather than in June when classes had ended. The University of Michigan's programming in April included a rally and a circus-themed Pride Prom.

The National Museum of African Art in Washington, DC, has opened "Pride and Belonging in African Art," an exhibit of African LGBTQ+ art featuring 60 works by 30 artists. Also in Washington, DC, the Capital Pride Celebration will take place from June 12–21, with events that include a parade and block parties.

The Boston Theater Company in Massachusetts is set to hold its sixth annual Road of Rainbows, a 5K race and concert, on June 6. Houston, Texas, will host a 5K Pride run on June 27. In Ohio, the Stonewall Columbus Pride Festival and March, one of the largest Pride events in the Midwest, will be held on June 19–20.

One of the world's largest Pride parades, which typically draws at least 2 million people, is scheduled to take place in New York City on June 28. This year's theme is "For All of Us."

THE WEEK'S SILLIEST HEADLINE

"Bear caught on camera enjoying 'all you can eat' birdseed 'buffet'" *UPI*

GETTY IMAGES (5); NEA; ON LEFT PAGE: NASA (2); NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME; GETTY IMAGES

Around the world

One of the artworks

The Hague, Netherlands
Inflatable art displayed in city

The Hague has been transformed into an outdoor gallery with inflatable artworks all over the city. The first BlowUp Art exhibition took place five years ago, and the latest installment celebrates this anniversary by featuring popular works from previous editions. Residents and visitors can look out for 20 giant works of art designed by artists from around the world. The exhibition will run until June 21.

A ship carrying liquefied natural gas

Vancouver, Canada
Energy agreement made with Germany

Canadian energy minister Tim Hodgson announced on May 27 that Canada has made a new agreement with Germany. Under the deal, Canada plans to send 1.1 million tons of liquefied natural gas to Germany each year. The substance will be extracted from the ground and used as a source of energy. Hodgson said this will improve the global energy supply, which has been negatively affected by the wars in Ukraine and Iran.

A health check

Uganda
Border closed due to Ebola virus

Uganda has closed its border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to contain the spread of Ebola, a serious disease. At least 321 cases have been confirmed in the DRC, and 15 were reported in Uganda after health workers were exposed to infected patients. Entry into Uganda from the DRC is banned except in emergencies, and travelers must isolate for 21 days.

Billund, Denmark
Helping kids in conflict areas

A charity related to the maker of Lego bricks has pledged $97 million to help children in conflict areas learn through play. The Lego Foundation will work with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to bring "playful learning" to 5 million kids in East Africa and the Middle East. The IRC's president said it's about "giving the best of childhood back."

Lego headquarters in Billund

Kolkata, India
Statue to be removed

A 70-foot-tall statue of soccer star Lionel Messi holding up the World Cup trophy will be taken down due to safety concerns. The monument was erected in December 2025 during Messi's GOAT Tour, but residents of Kolkata recently reported that it was swaying in the wind. Engineers inspected the statue and found it to be unsafe. It has been secured with ropes, and a fence is keeping people away until the monument can be removed.

The statue

GETTY IMAGES (7); ALAMY (2); LEGO

Around the world

Péter Magyar and Ursula von der Leyen

Hungary
Funding from EU to arrive

Ursula von der Leyen, a top official of the European Union (EU, a group of 27 nations), said on May 29 that $19 billion will be sent to Hungary. The EU had refused to release the funds due to concerns about the tactics of Viktor Orbán, Hungary's former leader, but new prime minister Péter Magyar took office in May and has made changes.

Some of the jewelry

Cairo, Egypt
Ancient artifacts discovered

On May 31, authorities revealed several new discoveries from archaeological sites in and around Cairo, Egypt's modern capital. The objects include a collection of earrings, likely made of gold, found at the site of the ancient city of Heliopolis. At a burial ground about 80 miles south, scientists unearthed stone building blocks and a marble head of the Greek goddess Aphrodite. The government hopes the artifacts will inspire tourists to visit Egypt.

A street in Shibuya

Shibuya, Japan
Initiative to reduce littering

A new initiative to prevent littering in Shibuya went into effect on June 1. Takeout restaurants, convenience stores, and vending machine operators must now install trash cans, and about 50 officials will patrol tourist areas and confront people who litter. Anyone who drops garbage on the ground will be required to pay an immediate fine of about $13. The initiative's slogan is "If you throw trash, you lose cash."

China
Historic space travel

Four astronauts made history as one crew returned home and another launched into space. Zhang Lu, Wu Fei, and Zhang Hongzhang landed in northern China on May 29 after 210 days at the Tiangong space station, setting a record for the longest mission by a Chinese crew. They were replaced by the Shenzhou-23 crew: Zhu Yangzhu, Zhang Zhiyuan, and Li Jiaying, the first astronaut from Hong Kong to travel to space. This crew could spend a full year in orbit.

Left to right: Li Jiaying, Zhu Yangzhu, and Zhang Zhiyuan

Mice at a grain farm

Australia
Mouse infestation destroys crops

Farmers are spending thousands of dollars to replant crops as mice have swarmed across Australia, eating fields of grain. A record-breaking harvest last year gave mice plenty of grain to eat, increasing their numbers. Then rainfall boosted plant growth, providing even more food. Officials say the population has reached "plague" level, with as many as 3,000 mice per acre.

Should jaywalking be allowed?

While some say it can be done safely, others think it should be against the law.

What you need to know

- **Jaywalking is the act of crossing the street where it is not allowed, like outside a crosswalk or against a traffic light. The term was coined in the early 1900s.**
- **In 1912, Kansas City, Missouri, became the first US city to make jaywalking illegal. In 2021, it became one of the first cities to reverse the law. Others have done the same.**
- **Today, jaywalking is still illegal in many places in the US, and jaywalkers can be fined by law enforcement.**

In the early 1900s in the Midwest, the word "jaywalking" was used to describe someone from the countryside who didn't know how to act on big-city sidewalks and streets. As cars started appearing on roads around that time, pedestrians began getting hurt. Jaywalking soon became illegal in many parts of the country and still is today. People who think it's OK to jaywalk say that pedestrians should have priority over cars. Those against it argue that the world has changed and cars on streets are a reality. We have to find a way to work together, they say, and following safety rules is the only option. What do you think? Should jaywalking be allowed?

Yes—people can handle it

Jaywalking may not be ideal, but that doesn't mean it should be illegal. Studies show that the laws are often unfairly applied to people of color, who get ticketed the most. Besides, stopping people for jaywalking isn't a good use of police officers' time. There are bigger crimes that need their attention. A better solution is to design cities with pedestrian-friendly streets so people can walk safely. This means having more crosswalks and stop signs, shorter wait times at traffic lights, and lower speed limits for vehicles. As long as people are crossing the street safely, there's no need to have police officers monitor them.

No—rules are rules

It's simple: Everyone must follow the rules to keep roads safe for pedestrians and drivers. Drivers follow speed limits to keep pedestrians and other drivers safe, and pedestrians have to follow crossing restrictions for the same reasons. It's not fair or safe to expect drivers to make unexpected or sudden stops. This endangers everyone, especially at night when it's dark. If people are traveling by foot and in a hurry to get somewhere, they need to plan their commute better to account for any streets they have to cross. It's not hard for pedestrians to wait a few minutes until the traffic light turns red and the walk sign turns green.

YES Three reasons jaywalking should be allowed

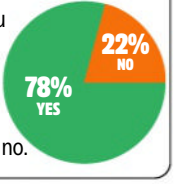
1. **Merely crossing the street should not be a criminal offense, and the laws are often unfairly applied.**
2. **Police officers have bigger issues to address. They should not be bothered with monitoring pedestrians.**
3. **It would be better to design streets to be safer and more pedestrian-friendly.**

NO Three reasons jaywalking should not be allowed

1. **Roads are safer if everyone follows the rules, including drivers and pedestrians.**
2. **It's not fair to make drivers unexpectedly stop in the middle of the street. That could be dangerous for them and others.**
3. **If people plan their walks better, they won't be in a hurry and will have time to follow the road rules.**

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if adults should read books for kids. Most of you like to share books written for you with grown-ups: 78% of you said yes, and 22% said no.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote YES if you think jaywalking should be allowed or NO if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

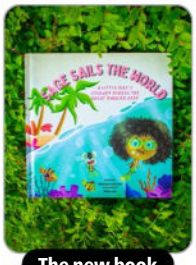
The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.

GETTY IMAGES

Protecting the planet

Diamond Spratling is helping people stand up for the environment.

Environmental justice activist Diamond Spratling is dedicated to making climate advocacy more inclusive. With her picture book series *Sage Sails the World,* she wants to help all children realize they can bring about change. She recently published *A Little Girl's Journey Across the Great Barrier Reef*, the second book in the series.



The new book

Growing up in Detroit, Michigan, Spratling spent hours outdoors, exploring nature. After watching a TV commercial about saving polar bears from the threat of melting ice, she decided she wanted to help. "I thought about who's going to stand up for wildlife, and I said, 'OK, I am,'" Spratling told *The Week Junior*. She went on to earn a degree in environmental policy from Bowling Green State University and a master's degree in global health from Emory University.

In 2019, during her first year of college, Spratling launched Girl Plus Environment. It offers education and advocacy training for Black and brown women, empowering them to take action on environmental issues that affect them. Today, the nonprofit has about 900 members across 38 US states.

Her latest book follows young Sage and her dog Benji to Australia, where she rallies friends to restore coral reefs. Spratling got the idea for the story after visiting the Great Barrier Reef on a vacation. She hopes the story increases readers' understanding of climate issues and sparks conversations within families.

Spratling wants young people to know that they can help protect their community at any age. "There's no such thing as an action being too small," she said.

Diamond Spratling

AMAZING! The Great Barrier Reef, off the coast of Australia, stretches about 1,429 miles and can be seen from space.

Top teaching honor

A middle school theater teacher in Ellenwood, Georgia, will receive the annual Excellence in Theatre Education Award at the 79th Tony Awards on June 7. An educator for more than 30 years, Freddie Hendricks has also served as artistic director of a youth theater in Atlanta. Many of his students, including *Saturday Night Live* star Kenan Thompson, have gone on to have successful Broadway and TV careers. His teaching centers on creativity and persistence. "The key to success is to never stop the pursuit of it," Hendricks said.

Freddie Hendricks

Takashi Tezuka

Gaming icon retires

Takashi Tezuka, a legendary Japanese video game designer, is retiring from his role as a senior executive officer at Nintendo after nearly 40 years with the company. Tezuka joined Nintendo in 1984 and co-created the original Super Mario Bros. (1985) and The Legend of Zelda (1986), two of the most influential franchises in the gaming world. He is known for building imaginative game worlds with longtime collaborator and fellow Nintendo designer Shigeru Miyamoto. Tezuka once said, "We want our games to be enjoyed and understood worldwide by as many people as possible."

OVERHEARD

"This is not all of you. This is just a part of you, and we've all got something."

Oscar-nominated actress Emily Blunt on living with a stutter since childhood

COURTESY OF DIAMOND SPRATLING (2); GETTY IMAGES (3)

PETAL POWER
About 80% of all the known green plants on Earth produce flowers.

A Titan arum, also known as a "corpse flower"

Keeping the Earth in bloom

A study has identified nearly 10,000 of the world's most distinct and at-risk flowering plant species. Conservationists say the research will help identify which species need protecting.

Scientists from Kew Gardens and the Zoological Society of London in the UK used a system called EDGE (Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered) that looks at a species' risk of going extinct and how distinct it is within the "tree of life"—a concept used to map how living things relate to each other, with related species sharing "branches."

A magnolia blossom

The researchers focused on plant species that have few or no close relatives. EDGE is already being used for animals, but it's the first time the system has been used for flowering plants, also called angiosperms.

The study identified 9,945 EDGE or at-risk species—about 3% of all known angiosperms. The most at-risk was Hondurodendron urceolatum, a tree found on one mountain range in Honduras.

Other EDGE species included Titan arum, which is one of the world's stinkiest plants. It's often called the "corpse flower" because it smells like dead flesh when it blooms. The study also listed the jellyfish tree, whose umbrella-shaped flowers look like the sea creatures, and Nymphaea thermarum, the world's smallest water lily, which can measure less than 0.4 inches across.

Several types of magnolias, which are often used as flowering trees for homes and gardens, were identified among the most at-risk species. Some of the EDGE plants are also directly useful to humans, such as Vanilla planifolia, an orchid that is the source of most of the world's vanilla. Another tree, Gomortega keule, produces a popular fruit and wood that is used for construction.

Félix Forest, who led the study, said it highlights "the threatened species that are often overlooked." The researchers say these species must be saved from extinction in order to prevent the loss of an entire branch of the tree of life—not to mention the benefits these plants provide, which are "as unique and irreplaceable as the species themselves," study co-author Matilda Brown said.

The quest for the ideal forest

A SERC plot after 10 years

Forests are usually made up of a variety of plants, animals, and other living things. But when people plant trees to regrow a forest, they often use only one type of tree. Scientists at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) have begun conducting experiments to explore which combinations of species will create the healthiest forests.

The team is now planting 33,518 saplings on 194 plots of land, each containing a specific blend of trees and shrubs. For example, one combination designed to attract wildlife includes Chickasaw plum, black chokeberry, persimmon, hazelnut, and witch hazel. Experts will carefully monitor the results.

TUMMY TIME
A cow's stomach is divided into four chambers called the abomasum, omasum, reticulum, and rumen.

A cow

The cause of cows' famous burps

Cows are known for their relentless burps, which are bad for the environment because they emit methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. This gas remains in Earth's atmosphere and traps heat, causing the planet to warm up. A new study identified how methane is produced in cows' bodies.

Like humans and other animals, cows have what is known as a microbiome—a collection of microorganisms (tiny living things) such as bacteria that live in their bodies. This includes rumen ciliates, which inhabit a compartment of the cow's stomach. The study found that rumen ciliates produce hydrogen gas, which other microorganisms then use to make methane.

By closely examining the rumen ciliates, the researchers were able to identify a special biological structure that produces the hydrogen. They called this structure a hydrogenobody. When rumen ciliates had more hydrogenobodies, more methane was created. Knowing how cows' bodies produce these gases could help scientists come up with ways to reduce the amount of methane that cows release in their burps.

Animal of the week: Red-necked nightjar

New research found that this bird feeds, breeds, and lives its life according to the phases of the Moon. Active at night, the birds need moonlight to see and catch insects. During a dark "new Moon," they lower their body temperature to save energy.

- **LIFESPAN:** 3 to 10 years
- **HABITAT:** Rocky hillsides, pine woods, dry areas
- **SIZE:** About 1 foot long with a 2-foot wingspan
- **DIET:** Moths and other insects
- **FUN FACT:** This bird's call sounds similar to a car alarm or electronic locking sound.

Good week / Bad week

Giant rabbits

A group of nuns in Spain is saving an endangered breed from extinction. For more than 30 years, they have been nurturing Spanish giant rabbits. They currently care for 35 rabbits, and at least 90 have been born this year.

Coyotes

The US government lifted a ban on using traps known as "cyanide bombs" on public lands. These devices are used to kill coyotes and other predators that could threaten livestock. They can also harm endangered creatures such as wolves.

ASK AN EXPERT: "Why do sharks have a nose even though they have gills to breathe?" Kyla, 10, California

Nicole Gioia,
Aquarium curator,
Pittsburgh Zoo & Aquarium

Sharks use their gills to absorb oxygen into their bodies. They have nostril-like "nares" to detect scents. Water passes through the nares, and the scent information from the water goes to the shark's brain to be interpreted. This helps sharks find their prey.

A white shark has nares on the underside of its snout.

Do you have a question for an animal expert? Send it to *hello@theweekjunior.com*. Find out more about Pittsburgh Zoo & Aquarium at pittsburghzoo.org.

GETTY IMAGES (4); LISSETTE LEMUS/GLOBAL SISTERS REPORT; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (2); SERC

Get set for amazing

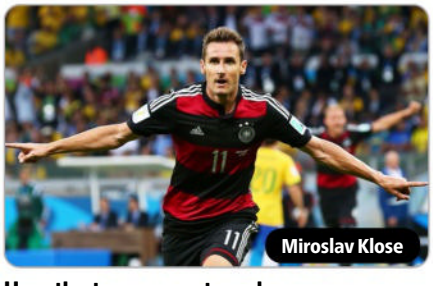
More teams than ever will compete in the biggest World Cup in history.

Held every four years, the FIFA World Cup is the largest tournament in men's international soccer. The US, Canada, and Mexico will host as 48 teams compete from June 11 through July 19.

The Uruguay team in 1930

History of the World Cup

Soccer became an Olympic sport in the early 1900s, but only amateur athletes competed in the Games at that time. The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the global governing body for soccer, created its own championship for professional players. The first World Cup took place in 1930. It featured 13 teams, and host nation Uruguay won. By 1998 the tournament expanded to 32 teams, a format that stayed in place until the last World Cup, in 2022. This year, for the first time, 48 teams will compete.



Miroslav Klose

How the tournament works

There are six confederations (regional groupings) in international soccer. Teams earn a spot in the World Cup based on qualifying matches in their region. (The host nations automatically qualify.) At the tournament, the 48 teams are divided into 12 groups of four. Countries play the teams in their group and get three points for a win and one for a draw. The top 32 teams advance to the knockout rounds, which include the quarterfinals, semifinals, and final match.

GAME CHANGER
The US first hosted the World Cup in 1994, which led to the creation of Major League Soccer.

Lionel Messi holds the winning trophy after he led Argentina to victory in the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Iconic World Cup moments

The tournament offers athletes a chance to make their mark on history and soccer fans forever—as these stars did.

The Cruyff turn

At the 1974 World Cup, the Netherlands' star Johan Cruyff (left) spun halfway around while dribbling the ball and left a bewildered defender behind. The simple, stylish "Cruyff turn" became a classic skill in the game.

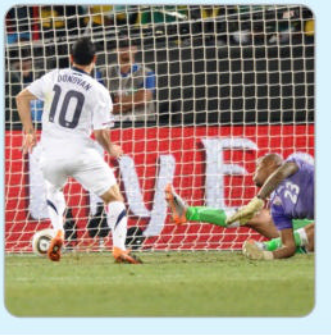
GETTY IMAGES

soccer action!

MORE TO COME
The next FIFA Women's World Cup will be held in Brazil from June 24 to July 25, 2027.

Goal of the century

In a match against England at the 1986 World Cup, Diego Maradona of Argentina (left) dribbled the ball from his own half and past his opponents to score what is now known as the "goal of the century."



Donovan's stunner

In the US' final group stage match against Algeria at the 2010 World Cup, Landon Donovan (left) led a counterattack and scored a late goal to give the US the win and a spot in the knockouts.

Pelé (left)

The big winners

Brazil has a total of five FIFA Men's World Cup titles, the most of any nation. Three of those championships were earned from 1958 through 1970, led by the superstar known around the world by one name: Pelé. Germany and Italy have four titles each, while Argentina has three, including the last World Cup in 2022. France and Uruguay have two titles, while England won the tournament in 1966 and Spain in 2010. The Netherlands has finished in second place three times. Miroslav Klose of Germany holds the record for most goals at the World Cup with 16, followed by Brazil's Ronaldo with 15 and Germany's Gerd Müller with 14.

The US team in 2025

Preview of the competition

Argentina will be a team to watch, especially since its star forward, Lionel Messi, will likely be playing in his final World Cup. Another contender, Spain, is the defending European champion and features Lamine Yamal, one of the brightest young stars in the sport. Other favorites include France, led by Kylian Mbappé; England, powered by Harry Kane; and a Brazilian team with standout players such as Vinícius Júnior. The US team will be led by top performer Christian Pulisic. (Find out who else is playing for the US on page 18.) The tournament will start on June 11 with a match between Mexico and South Africa, and the US will play its first match on June 12 against Paraguay. The champion will be crowned after the final match on July 19 in New Jersey.

The World Cup trophy

WOW! From 1947 to 1969, a top-secret Air Force team called Project Blue Book investigated more than 12,000 reports of UFOs.

The US government created this rendering of a UFO based on reports by people who claimed to have seen it.

US releases classified UFO files

The US government has released hundreds of formerly classified files about unidentified flying objects (UFOs). The files include eyewitness accounts of UFO sightings by citizens, pilots, the military, and astronauts, as well as many photos and videos of unknown objects in flight.

Officially known as unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAPs), UFOs have captured the public imagination for decades. The idea of spaceships carrying alien life-forms took off in 1947, when a man named Kenneth Arnold claimed to have seen UFOs while flying a plane near Mount Rainier in Washington.

That same year, the US Army reported that debris from a flying disc had been found near Roswell, New Mexico. The Army later clarified that it was actually a crashed weather balloon, but it was too late. The idea of little green aliens traveling to Earth in flying saucers had begun to spread, as had conspiracy theories that the US government was covering them up.

The US government has investigated UFO reports but has not revealed any proof of alien activity. By releasing the files, the government said it wants to "share our findings with the American people." Many files were released in 2020, and this year, the White House said it would release the rest in several batches.

Buzz Aldrin

The files that have been released so far include a report given by Buzz Aldrin, an astronaut with NASA (US space agency), in 1969. That year, Aldrin was aboard the Apollo 11 mission, which put humans on the Moon for the first time. In a statement in the files, Aldrin described seeing "a fairly bright light source" while in flight. There are also videos taken by the US military that show small lights and other objects moving quickly and smoothly through the sky. A photograph from the Apollo 17 mission shows three mysterious lights forming a triangle.

The government emphasized that no "definitive determination" has been made about the sightings reported in the files, and experts stress that UFO reports are not proof of extraterrestrial life. They said that in many cases, the objects are drones, top-secret military aircraft, or the result of bizarre weather patterns or technical glitches. The planet Venus has been reported as a UFO because it can appear as a bright light that moves in the sky.

What is Area 51?

Area 51 is a top-secret US military base in southern Nevada, although the US government officially calls it Groom Lake or Homey Airport. The base was established in 1955, and it has since been used as a site for testing highly advanced and classified aircraft. The US military carefully restricts access to the base and only officially acknowledged its existence in 2013.

The secrecy and high-tech aircraft flying near Area 51 have led people to associate it with UFOs and aliens. In the 1980s, a man named Robert Lazar said he had worked at the base and seen aliens there, although he later said he made up the whole story. Still, many tourists visit the area, and local people have set up alien-themed shops and attractions (like the one shown above) near the base.

Neanderthals made tools from rhinoceros teeth

Scientists studying ancient rhinoceros teeth determined that Neanderthals not only hunted and ate the animals but also used their teeth to make tools. The team based the discovery on rhino teeth found in France and Spain.

Neanderthals were early humans and the closest ancient relatives of modern humans. They lived in what are now Europe and parts of Asia beginning about 400,000 years ago, before going extinct about 40,000 years ago.

Our early human ancestors lived alongside many animals, including the narrow-nosed rhino, which lived until about 100,000 years ago. Scientists have known for many years that Neanderthals used animal parts like bones and antlers to make advanced tools. The new research provides the first evidence that they also used animal teeth to make tools.

FACT FILE
There were once more than 50 rhinoceros species, but now there are five, including two in Africa and three in Asia.

An artist's illustration of an extinct rhino

The study came about after scientists studying preserved rhino teeth noticed grooves, notches, and scrapes on them that appeared to have been made intentionally by being hit or carved. Intrigued, they examined other rhino teeth found in caves in France and Spain and saw that they had similar marks on them. The team examined the teeth under a microscope and determined that the marks were not caused by normal activity, like chewing food.

To learn more, the researchers took modern rhino teeth and used them the way Neanderthals might have used them to sculpt tools and cut leather or vegetables. Sure enough, similar marks appeared on the modern teeth. They concluded that Neanderthals picked teeth of different shapes and sizes for different tasks, which suggested that early humans had complex thinking abilities.

The study asked people to "steal" fries.

Other people's fries really are tastier

French fries nabbed from someone else's plate really do taste better, according to a new study.

Participants were served identical portions of fries in different ways. Sometimes they were simply given the fries. Other times, another diner handed them over. In some cases, participants were told to "steal" fries from another plate, first when the fry owner was distracted and then as a stern-looking stranger looked on.

After each round, volunteers were asked to rank the fries by taste. They reported that the fries snatched in the "high-risk" situation, when they were being watched and could get caught, were saltier and crispier than the others. Participants rated them nearly 40% more enjoyable than the fries they had been given.

Researchers said this could be because people enjoy small, harmless acts of rule-breaking and want things more if they feel risky.

AMAZING INVENTION

A pillow that alerts deaf people

The smart pillow sleeve

Scientists at Nottingham Trent University in the UK have made a smart pillow sleeve to alert deaf people in case of an emergency. Many deaf people use vibrating gadgets under their pillows because they can't hear smoke or burglar alarms. But those devices can be bulky.

The sleeve is thin and flexible and fits over a standard pillow. It has four tiny buzzing motors that link wirelessly to phones and alarms. The pillow vibrates when there's a call or a fire or burglar alarm. The alerts have different vibration patterns so users can tell them apart.

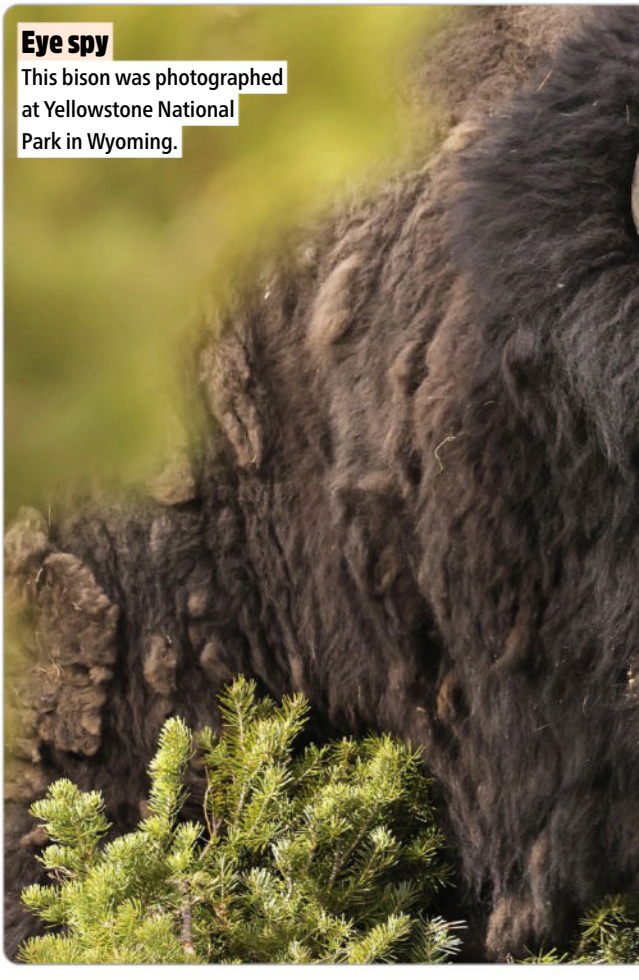
JAVIER BARBUZANO; GETTY IMAGES; NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY; ON LEFT PAGE: U.S. GOVERNMENT/FBI; GETTY IMAGES (2)

Photos of the week

Bugging out
In Turkey, a bee collects nectar from a flower.

Bright spots
Glowing bamboo rafts form a golden dragon on a river in China.

Perfect perch
At a historic lotus pond in Nepal, a bird sits on a jacaranda tree branch.



Eye spy
This bison was photographed at Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming.

GETTY IMAGES (6)

Photos of the week

Seeing stripes
A white tiger in a zoo in India gets misted by a sprinkler.

Open wide
Flowers bloom at the Chelsea Flower Show in the UK.

FUN FACT
The 26 players on the USMNT roster were born in 12 different US states as well as the UK, Germany, and the Netherlands.

The US Men's National Team on May 26

US World Cup roster revealed

The 2026 FIFA World Cup begins on June 11, and it's now known which players will represent the US as members of its national team. At an event on May 26 in New York City, manager Mauricio Pochettino officially announced his 26-player World Cup roster. The team includes a mix of young players and experienced veterans, ranging in age from 21 to 38.

The USMNT (US Men's National Soccer Team) is currently ranked 16th in the world. The US has never won a World Cup and was knocked out during the Round of 16 in the last tournament, in 2022. Still, hopes are high this year because the US is one of the co-hosts of the competition. (Find out more about the World Cup on page 12.)

The 2026 World Cup logo

Before Pochettino made his selections, he spent more than 19 months evaluating players at training camps and international matches. This year's group is notable because unlike the teams that represented the US in many past World Cups, all of the players on the current roster come from clubs in the top divisions of professional soccer in Europe and North America. Eight of them compete for MLS (Major League Soccer) teams, including all three selected goalkeepers: Chris Brady (Chicago Fire FC), Matt Freese (New York City FC) and Matt Turner (New England Revolution). Thirteen of the players were also on the USMNT roster in 2022.

The player with the most experience as a USMNT member is Christian Pulisic, a forward who usually plays for AC Milan. Other key players are expected to include midfielders Weston McKennie (Juventus), Tyler Adams (AFC Bournemouth), and Gio Reyna (Borussia Mönchengladbach); forward Tim Weah (Marseille); defender Antonee Robinson (Fulham); and striker Folarin Balogun (AS Monaco). Pochettino named Tim Ream (Charlotte FC), another defender and the oldest team member, as the captain for the World Cup.

In their first warm-up exhibition match, they faced Senegal on May 31 and won, 3–2. Sergiño Dest (PSV Eindhoven), Pulisic, and Balogun scored the goals. The team was set to play a warm-up match against Germany on June 6.

The World Cup starts with group stage action. The US team's first opponent will be Paraguay on June 12. They will also play Australia and Turkey in an attempt to advance to the knockout stage.

Champions League winners

The final of the UEFA Champions League, a competition between top European club soccer teams, was played on May 30. Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), the champions of France's Ligue 1, faced Arsenal FC, the English Premier League champs, and won on penalty kicks. It is PSG's second straight Champions League title.

Kai Havertz of Arsenal scored the opening goal in the sixth minute, and PSG's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia drew a penalty kick in the second half that was converted by Ousmane Dembélé to tie the score. The match was still tied at the end of extra time, so it went to a shootout that PSG won, 4–3. Kvaratskhelia was named Champions League Player of the Season.

A competitor at the Ninja European Championship last year

GLOBAL PASSION
More than 25 countries have their own versions of the *Ninja Warrior* competition series.

Exciting change to Olympic sport

A big change is coming to an Olympic competition that will be part of the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles, California. On May 26, officials announced that obstacles inspired by the popular *Ninja Warrior* television competition will be added to the modern pentathlon, a multi-sport event.

The pentathlon has been part of the Olympics since they were held in ancient Greece. At that time, it involved running, jumping, wrestling, discus throwing, and javelin throwing. The modern pentathlon, introduced at the 1912 Games, featured fencing, swimming, horseback riding, running, and shooting. Today, running and shooting are a combined event, the laser run.

After controversy involving horses at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, officials voted to remove horseback riding from the pentathlon. One idea was to replace it with cross-country cycling, but obstacle racing won out because it is exciting to watch and could attract a new generation of fans.

Now the Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne, which oversees the sport, has teamed up with Tokyo Broadcasting System Television (TBS), the company behind *Sasuke*, the hit Japanese TV series known internationally as *Ninja Warrior.* As a result, the Olympic obstacle races will use some designs and ideas developed for the show. Their courses, which test athletes' speed, balance, grip, and strength, often include unstable platforms, climbing obstacles, and swings. TBS executive Katsuaki Setoguchi said the deal is a "groundbreaking milestone" for both organizations.

COACH OF THE WEEK

Coach's Name: **Alicia Douglas**

Team: **3D Motion Dance Center**

"Ms. Alicia is an amazing teacher. She is the one who created this studio, and she has made it a second home for so many people who go there. She always supports and inspires us. She emphasizes the fact that we are all a team, that it's important to be there for each other, and that it doesn't matter how we place at a competition as long as we do our best. She is so amazing." Hannah, 14, Florida

To nominate a Coach of the Week, send your coach's name, photo, sport, and team to *hello@theweekjunior.com.* Include your name, age, state, and a few reasons why your coach is great.

MORE BIG MOMENTS

BASKETBALL

On May 30, in the winner-take-all Game 7 of the NBA Western Conference Finals, the San Antonio Spurs beat the Oklahoma City Thunder, 111–103. Spurs star Victor Wembanyama scored 22 points in the game. The Thunder had been the top team in the NBA during the regular season and were last season's champions.

CLUB SOCCER

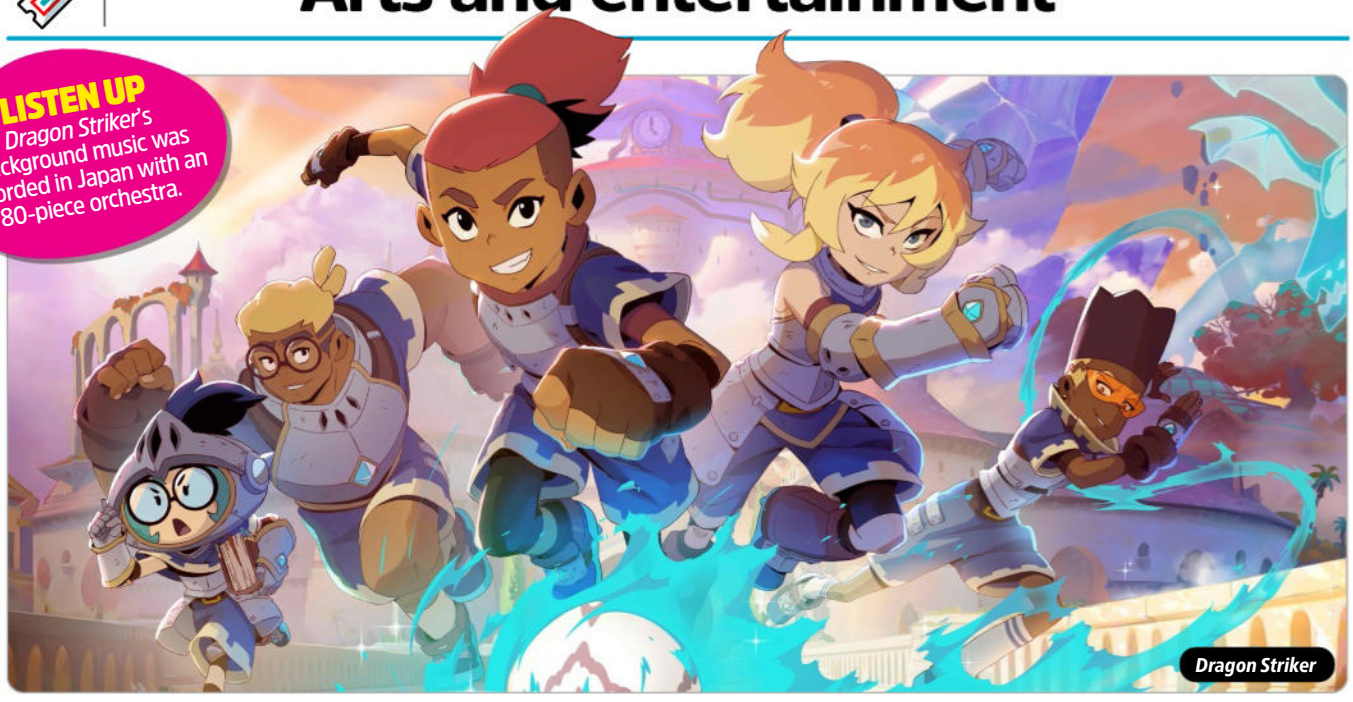
The NWSL's two top teams, the Utah Royals and Portland Thorns, faced off in a key match on May 30 that ended in a 2–2 draw. Olivia Moultrie and Sophia Wilson scored for the Thorns, while Kiana Palacios and Cloé Lacasse scored for the Royals. The next day, the San Diego Wave beat the Chicago Stars, 2–0, and moved into first place.

COLLEGE BASEBALL

In a major upset during the Regionals stage of the College Baseball World Series on May 31, the team from St. Mary's College of California eliminated the tournament's top overall seed, UCLA, with a 6–5, walk-off victory in the 10th inning. St. Mary's made the Regional Final for the first time ever but then was eliminated.

GETTY IMAGES (4); ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (2); FIFA

LISTEN UP
Dragon Striker's background music was recorded in Japan with an 80-piece orchestra.


Dragon Striker

Series mixes sports and fantasy

Disney's new show *Dragon Striker* was inspired by Japanese comics and animation.

Japanese comics known as shonen manga are often action-packed adventures, and many of them, including the popular *One Piece*, have been turned into animated series. A sub-genre, sports shonen, has plots that incorporate athletics and helped inspire the new Disney animated series *Dragon Striker*. It features a football-like sport and is filled with high-stakes matches, powerful rivalries, and fantastical elements. All 11 episodes premiere on Disney+ and Hulu on June 10.

Dragon Striker is set in fictional Asteria, where the 5-on-5 sport Gorotama dominates the world. In matches, players use powerful abilities called tamas that allow them to do things such as control time, duplicate themselves, or freeze opponents. The main character is 12-year-old Key, a farm boy who discovers he may be the "Dragon Striker," the sport's greatest champion. After he is accepted into a school for gifted players, he and a team of underdogs take on the school's champions. When an ancient evil resurfaces, secrets linked to the past are uncovered and Key's powers grow.

Key

The series was created by director Charles Lefebvre and executive producer Sylvain Dos Santos, who are part of the French animation studio La Chouette Compagnie. They told *The Week Junior* they loved sports manga when they were kids and were influenced by series such as *Captain Tsubasa* and *Dragon Ball Z*. "We were raised on these stories and narrative conventions," they said. They wanted to create their own sports shonen "but with a slight twist on the classic formula."

Typically, manga and animated shows based on the comics use visual effects to enhance excitement and action. In *Dragon Striker*, though, real magic exists in the world and is a big part of the Gorotama action. "When Key summons his dragon, there's a real dragon on the field and everyone can see it," Lefebvre and Dos Santos said.

Even with the show's mystery and spectacle, the story is grounded in Key and his teammates' relationships and emotions. "It's about kids and teenagers with dreams, hopes, challenges, crushes, and sometimes disenchantments," the creators said. "As in any shonen worthy of the name," they added, "what we want to highlight above all else is the importance and power of true friendship."

Baseball goes galactic

Several Major League Baseball stars will become sci-fi heroes in an upcoming manga series. Aaron Judge, Juan Soto, Jung Hoo Lee, Paul Skenes, Fernando Tatis Jr., and other players are set to appear in *GalaXic Baseball League* (above), which will launch on July 2 in digital chapters on the VIZ Manga app in the US. A print edition of the comic will be published in October.

The *GalaXic Baseball League* story takes place in a futuristic outer space, where baseball has become an interplanetary sport. Renowned manga artist Acky Bright, who has done work for DC Comics and Marvel, created the story and the artwork. Bright said he hopes readers "can escape into an epic that brings the heart and soul of baseball to life in another galaxy."

Artists with new music in the National Recording Registry

Recordings added to National Registry

Each year, the Library of Congress (LOC) picks 25 American recordings with "cultural, historical, or aesthetic importance" and adds them to the National Recording Registry for preservation. The 2026 selections have been announced, and they span 70 years of recorded sound and many genres.

The National Recording Registry was created in 2002 and now has 700 recordings. They include music, speeches, and podcasts. The selections are guided by public nominations and ideas from experts, and must be at least 10 years old. Robert Newlen, acting head of the LOC, said the registry preserves "a national playlist for generations to come."

The public nominated more than 3,000 recordings for this year's picks. For the first time, music by pop stars Taylor Swift and Beyoncé has been added to the registry. Swift's 2014 album *1989* was selected, as was Beyoncé's 2008 hit "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)". The LOC said the Grammy-winning song created a "cultural moment," thanks, in part, to Beyoncé's dance moves in the song's music video.

Other additions include the singles "Feliz Navidad" by José Feliciano (1970) and "Midnight Train to Georgia" (1973) by Gladys Knight and the Pips. Also chosen were the 1981 release from the Go-Go's, *Beauty and the Beat,* the first album written and performed by an all-female band to reach number one on music charts, and Weezer's 1994 release *Weezer (Blue Album)*, which was among the most nominated. A nonmusical pick was a radio broadcast of a legendary boxing match between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier.

DID YOU KNOW?
The soundtrack to the 2015 Broadway musical *Hamilton* is the youngest entry in the National Recording Registry.

READER RECOMMENDS

Troop Zero *PG (Amazon Prime)*

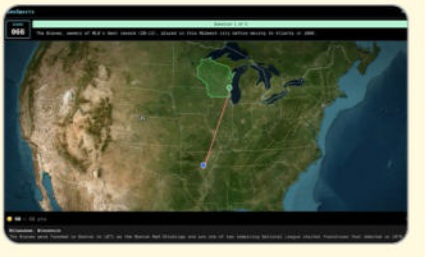
"This is such a great movie. It is about a girl named Christmas (played by McKenna Grace) who lives in 1970s Georgia with her dad and his assistant and loves outer space. When she finds out that the winners of a local Birdie Scouts talent show will get to send a message into space through NASA, she wants to participate. She gathers girls she knows—some of whom aren't even her friends—to form a troop. All they have to do is earn one badge to be eligible for the talent show, then put on a winning performance. This is a really good choice for a family movie night." Scarlette, 10, Minnesota

Do you have a film or TV show to recommend to other kids? Send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

3 MORE PICKS TO ENJOY THIS WEEK

WATCH: K-POPS!

Grammy winner Anderson .Paak wrote, directed, and stars in this comedy-drama (rated PG-13). He plays BJ, a drummer who joins the house band for a K-pop competition series in South Korea. He discovers that one of the contestants, Tae, is his son that he never knew about. As they bond, BJ also tries to help Tae win. (Netflix)



PLAY: GEOSPORTS

Every day, this site posts sports trivia related to geographical locations. For example, a recent question was about where Alex Rodriguez played his first seven seasons in Major League Baseball. Instead of typing an answer, you drop a pin on a world map. The closer you land to the correct spot, the higher your score. (geosports.app)

WATCH: OCEAN DREAMS

World Oceans Day is June 8, the same day this nature documentary opens in select IMAX and Giant Screen theaters. It is an immersive journey through some of the planet's largely unexplored seas. It includes a vibrant Indonesian archipelago, orcas hunting in Norway, and a remarkable coral reef recovery in the Marshall Islands. (In theaters)

BIG MACHINE; SONY; UMG; IRS; AMAZON STUDIOS; AURA ENTERTAINMENT; GEOSPORTS; SK FILMS; ON LEFT PAGE: DISNEY (2); VIZ MEDIA

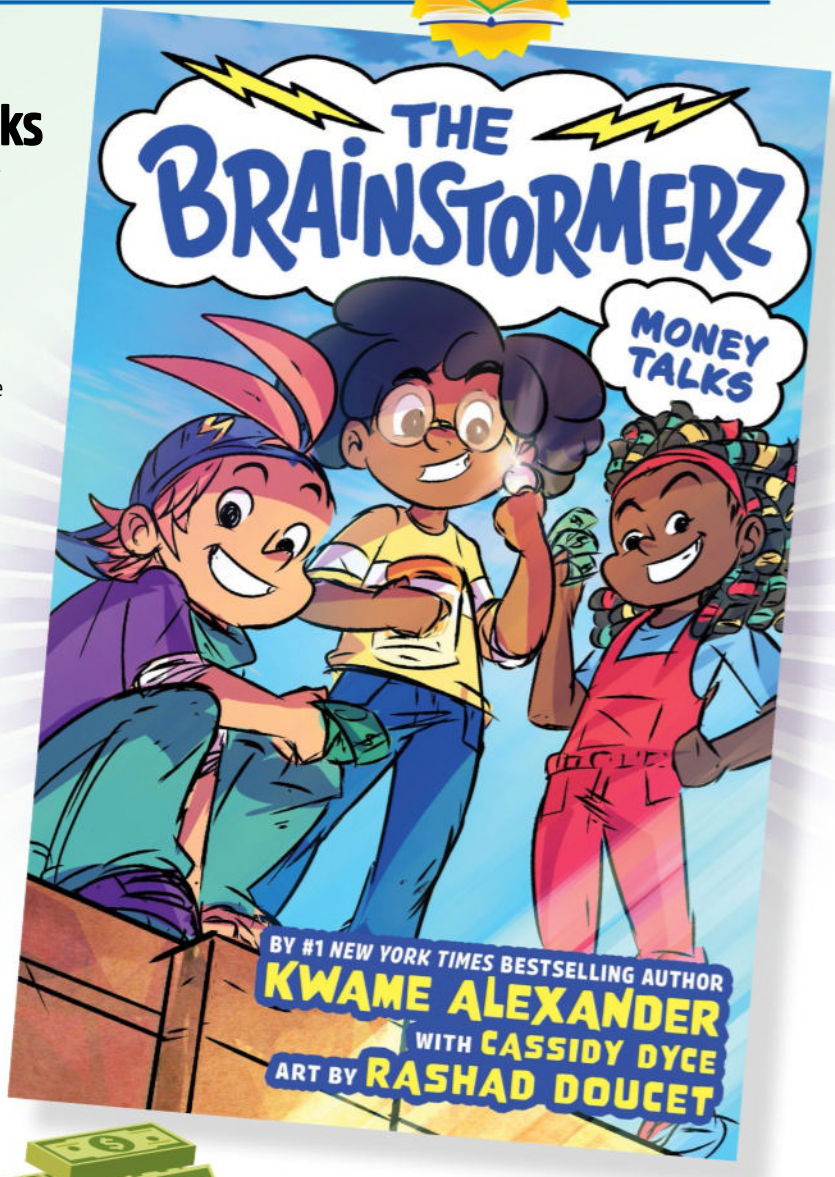
Book club

2026 Summer of Reading

THIS WEEK'S BOOK

The Brainstormerz: Money Talks

By Kwame Alexander with Cassidy Dyce, illustrated by Rashad Doucet



For his 10th birthday, Lex is getting his first phone but not the model he wants. Lex's parents plan to buy him the same phone they have rather than the Apollo XL phone, which is the hottest model on the market and costs $600. They tell Lex that if he wants the expensive phone, he needs to pay for it himself.

Lex and his best friends Cass and DJ brainstorm ways to raise the money. Their first plan is to sell peanut butter hot chocolate outside the bookstore his parents own. But something goes horribly wrong and they have to return all the money they made.

After a few more misadventures, including a failed dog-walking business and a school magic show that upsets the principal, Lex and his friends finally land on an idea that incorporates their drawing and writing talents. As they earn more money than they need for the phone by selling greeting cards, another problem surfaces: Lex's parents' bookstore might have to close because business is slow. Suddenly, a phone doesn't seem important anymore.

This new graphic novel, which seamlessly incorporates fun vocabulary words from Lex's family dictionary, is the first in a new series featuring the very likable trio of friends. *Ages 8–12*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR YOUR BOOK CLUB

What are the best qualities in Lex's friends?

Why do you think the friends' first few attempts to earn money fail?

Which money-making misadventure made you laugh the most?

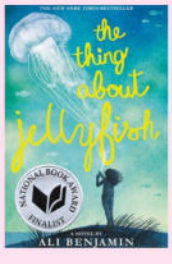
How would you describe the story's art?

Which character is most like you?

What do you think Lex meant when he said, "I was drowning in a sea of words?"

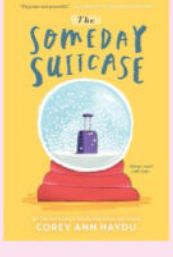
Find your next great read

If you liked…



The Thing About Jellyfish
By Ali Benjamin
A 12-year-old copes with the loss of her friend by theorizing that a jellyfish sting caused her to drown. She goes to great lengths to prove her theory, and chapter titles correspond to steps of the scientific method. *Ages 10+*

You might like…



The Someday Suitcase
By Corey Ann Haydu
When her best friend gets sick, Clover uses the scientific method to track his symptoms, discovering that they improve when she's around. She believes their friendship is symbiotic (they can't function without each other). *Ages 10+*

Guess the book this quote comes from

"Baby, we have no choice of what color we're born or who our parents are or whether we're rich or poor. What we do have is some choice over what we make of our lives once we're here."

Hint: This book is set in the 1930s South.

Answer: *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor. Cassie, 9, receives this advice from her mom after she experiences racism and injustice from a white resident in a nearby Mississippi town.

AUTHOR AMBASSADOR

Kwame Alexander

Although Kwame Alexander is best known for his novels in verse, he writes all genres of books. He just launched *The Brainstormerz*, a graphic novel series he co-authored with Cassidy Dyce. He won a Newbery medal in 2015 for *The Crossover*, a novel in verse about twin brothers who play basketball. This year he is an Author Ambassador for *The Week Junior*'s Summer of Reading program.

What inspired the story?

When my daughter was about to turn 12, she reminded her mother and me we had promised to buy her a phone. I was working on character development for the *Brainstormerz* series, and the situation became fuel for the first story.

How did you earn money as a child?

I sold books! My father owned a publishing company that specialized in historical and educational books. When I was 10 or 11, he took me to a trade show and promised to pay me 10% of my book sales. I made $103.60 that first day and worked for his business for the next decade.

When did you want to be an author?

Not when I was working for my dad! He had too many rules about selling books. When I started college, I wanted to be a doctor. The chemistry classes were really hard, and I met a girl and started writing her love poems. I realized that writing could make me cool, and an amazing professor gave me confidence in my work. I switched my major to English. In 1995, I got my first book—a collection of love poems—published.

Who is your favorite poet?

Langston Hughes—his poems are rhythmic and make you feel something. They also talked about big topics in a way young people can handle.

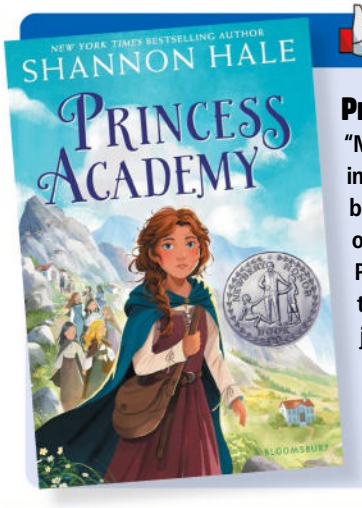
What are your summer plans?

I've always had a dream to own a hotel with a literary focus, and it's coming true. I've acquired a 26-room hotel in western New York, and this summer we're opening it with a literary theme.

What's your favorite place to read?

In the bathroom—that's so weird! I also love reading when I'm riding in cars.

Reader recommends



Princess Academy *By Shannon Hale*

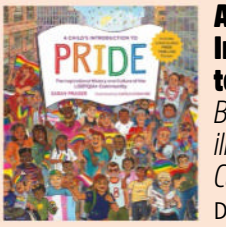
"Miri is an ordinary girl who tends goats and picks flowers in her village on Mount Eskel. One girl in the village will become the next princess of Danland. First, Miri and the other teenage girls in the village are required to attend Princess Academy to learn proper etiquette. But life at the academy is not fair, and Miri is soon demanding justice. Follow Miri through this suspenseful story as she fights for equality, learns kindness, and tries to be the truest princess of all." Lydia, 11, South Carolina

Do you have a book to recommend? We want to hear about it! With an adult's help, please send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

BOOKS: COURTESY OF PUBLISHERS; AUTHOR: ROWAN DALY; GETTY IMAGES

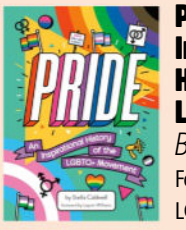
Nonfiction books about Pride Month

In these informative reads, you'll discover how June became the month for Pride.



A Child's Introduction to Pride
By Sarah Prager, illustrated by Caitlin O'Dwyer

Did you know there are more than two dozen kinds of Pride flags? This book explains their history and significance, dating back to the original rainbow flag in San Francisco in 1978. The book also highlights contributions of LGBTQ+ people in science, the arts, and more. *Ages 10+*



Pride: An Inspirational History of the LGBTQ+ Movement
By Stella Caldwell

Featuring a timeline of LGBTQ+ milestones, this book covers the birth of the Pride movement and many other groundbreaking events. It also includes profiles of famous LGBTQ+ individuals, including author Oscar Wilde (1854–1900). Photos and colorful illustrations complement the text. *Ages 12+*

Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag
By Rob Sanders, illustrated by Steven Salerno

In 1977, Harvey Milk became one of the first openly LGBTQ+ people elected to public office in the US. This picture book describes how the rainbow flag was created when Milk asked an artist to design a symbol to carry during a march for equality. *Ages 7–10*

Our list of "The 50 Books Kids Love Most" and more book ideas can be found at kids.theweekjunior.com/summerofreading.

Be a stronger swimmer

You can level up your skills in the water this summer.

One of the best physical activities you can do in summer is swimming. Maybe this is the summer you want to pass a deepwater test at your community pool or summer camp. Or maybe you'd like to swim laps. Here's how be a more confident swimmer.

Know water safety

The most important step to being a good swimmer, whether you're a beginner or advanced, is to be safe around water. First, be sure never to swim alone. Always swim where a lifeguard is watching and with a buddy. Enter the water feet first, and pay attention to designated swim areas marked by rope or lane lines. Look around for ladders, steps, or sides of the pool where you can safely exit the water.

Practice your favorite strokes.

Build the basics

You can practice the building blocks of swimming in waist-deep water. Being able to float and tread water are essential safety skills. To float, have an adult or friend gently support your back while you practice floating face up until you can do it on your own. To tread water, move your legs in a bicycle motion while you rotate your arms stretched out beside you, with cupped hands. Ask someone to time you to see how long you can tread water without holding the wall or touching your feet to the bottom. Set a goal to work toward, such as treading water for one to three minutes.

Develop your strokes

Four main strokes are recognized in competitive swimming: freestyle (also called the front crawl), backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly. Do whichever strokes you enjoy most! The most popular stroke is freestyle. If you want to get stronger at it, focus on keeping your head down and eyes on the bottom of the pool (don't look up!). Alternate your arms extending into the water in a circular motion, while turning your head to the side to breathe. Use your legs to flutter kick forward.

Just keep swimming!

The best way to get stronger at swimming is to swim more often. If you can, try to swim three or more days per week. Ask your family about taking swim lessons or joining a summer swim team, which may be offered at a nearby pool or lake.

3 fun pool games

Air ball Stand in waist-deep water away from other players. The goal: Tap a beach ball with your hands to pass it to others and keep it in the air as long as possible without letting it touch the water.

Sharks and minnows A "shark" is at one side of the pool. "Minnows" line the other. Each side swims to the opposite wall as the shark tags the minnows, making them sharks for the next round, until one minnow is left.

Marco Polo This classic game is named for the 13th-century Venetian explorer. One player closes their eyes and yells out "Marco." Players respond "Polo" and avoid being tagged.

FLAVOR BURST
Each of the tiny bumps on a blackberry is an individual mini-fruit that's called a drupelet.

WARNING!
Always ask an adult's permission before using the stove.

Make blackberry-orange chia seed jam

Ingredients

- Half of a vanilla bean pod
- 12 ounces fresh or frozen blackberries (slightly thawed if frozen)
- 2 (1- by 3-inch) strips orange peel
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- ⅓ cup dark brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons chia seeds
- Kosher salt

Instructions

1. With an adult's help, use a paring knife or kitchen shears to split the vanilla bean lengthwise. Scrape out seeds with the end of a butter knife. Put them in a medium saucepan.
2. Add the blackberries, orange peel, juice, and sugar to the pan. Stir the ingredients until the berries start to release their juices.
3. Place the pan over medium heat and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook until the berries start to break down and the liquid from the berries becomes syrupy, about 20 minutes.
4. Remove pan from the heat and stir in the chia seeds. (The seeds will help to naturally thicken the jam.)
5. Let the jam cool completely, and remove the orange peel before placing jam in an airtight container. Refrigerate until ready to use. The recipe makes one generous cup of jam, which can be stored for up to a week.

LIFE HACK MASTER THE ART OF FLYING A KITE

Kites are fun to fly! If you're a beginner, consider choosing a classic delta (triangle shaped) or eddy (diamond shaped) kite in a lightweight material with a tail. Both are easy models to fly. Next, pick a spot like an open field or beach, and fly it on a day when there's a steady breeze. Stand with your back to the wind, and have a friend hold the kite overhead. Back up and unravel the string. Next, have your helper let go of the kite while they jog in the other direction. This will push the kite up into the air. Once your kite is flying, slowly release more line to send it higher. Once you're ready to bring it down, roll the string back until the kite is low enough to the ground for you to grab.

Send it soaring!

JOY HOWARD; GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

Crisscross

Each of these fruits fits into this grid. Can you find where each one goes to complete the grid?

4 letters
DATE
LIME
PEAR
PLUM

5 letters
LEMON
MANGO

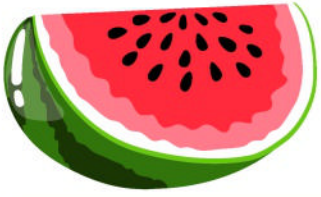
6 letters
BANANA
POMELO

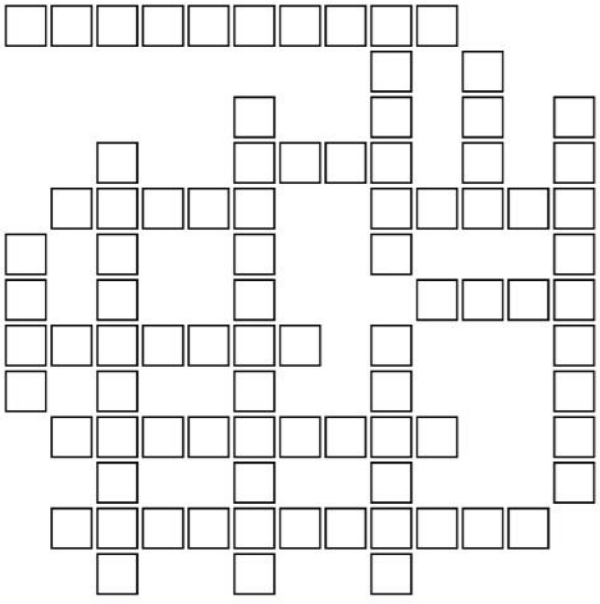
7 letters
APRICOT

9 letters
NECTARINE
TANGERINE

10 letters
CANTALOUPE
WATERMELON

11 letters
BLOOD ORANGE
POMEGRANATE





Take five

Five 5-letter words associated with baseball are hidden in this grid. For each one, the first letter is somewhere in the first column, the second is somewhere in the second column, and so on. Can you find all five?

S	L	T	N	H
M	A	I	O	D
C	O	R	T	G
T	W	U	C	E
P	H	A	N	W

ALL THE SAME

Each answer contains the letters M-A-N. Those letters have been placed for you. Can you figure out the words? (NEED A HINT? Check the bottom of the page.)

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

1. Japanese comics style — MAN☐☐
2. Harriet who helped escaped slaves on the Underground Railroad — ☐☐☐MAN
3. Lovey-dovey — ☐☐MAN☐☐☐
4. Amphibian that looks like a lizard — ☐☐☐☐MAN☐☐☐
5. *Star Wars* TV series with a "Baby Yoda" character — ☐☐☐MAN☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

SUDOKU

To complete the grid, place the numbers from 1 to 6 exactly once in each row, column, and 2x3 bold-lined box.

		3			1
	6			5	
5			3		
		1			5
	4			6	
2			5		

Spot the difference

These two pictures of soccer balls appear to be the same, but take a closer look. There are actually five differences. Can you see them?

PUZZLES BY PUZZABILITY

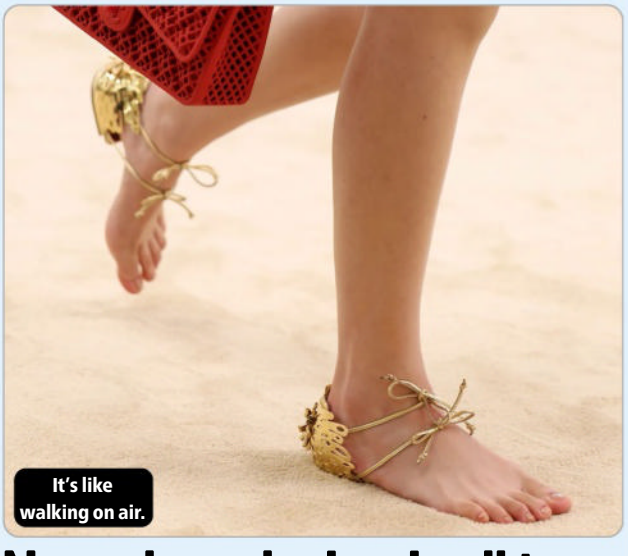
All the same hint: Word 4 begins with SA.

They're mutts about fashion

The Met Gala is a famous event hosted by fashion leaders in support of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. But at the Pet Gala, created by designer Anthony Rubio, four-legged fashionistas are the stars. At this year's gala, rescue pups were dressed in outfits based on celebrities' Met looks. A Chihuahua wore a jeweled headpiece inspired by singer Beyoncé, and a Maltese's feathery dress resembled the one worn by actress Nicole Kidman. Rubio said the canine red carpet filled him with "joy and pride."

Ready to guac and roll

During the 13th Annual Avocado Festival, chefs in Tancítaro, Mexico, whipped up a vat of guacamole that was heavier than an elephant. More than 800 chefs worked for hours to create the gargantuan green dip by combining local avocados with tomatoes, onions, lime, and cilantro. Their super serving weighed in at nearly 14,993 pounds, about 4,000 pounds heavier than the previous record from a neighboring city. After the world title was verified, the dip was shared with thousands of festival attendees.



New shoe design is all toes

Models recently showed off some of the Chanel brand's new "shoes"—and most of their feet—on the runway. The unusual sandals by designer Matthieu Blazy consist of a heel tied to the wearer's foot and nothing else. Opinions were divided over the barefoot design. While some people called it "freaky," Hannah Jackson from *Vogue* magazine said it was a "cheeky, fun idea." She added that although the barely-there shoes are not practical for everyday wear, "sometimes the whimsy is the entire point."

Real or fake?

A car with a portable potty

Many people know the struggle of needing to use the bathroom on a long car journey, but those troubles may soon be over. A Chinese company has been working on an idea for a new car design with a built-in toilet. Passengers would use a button or a voice command to prompt the toilet to slide out from underneath their seat. A pipe would pump the smell out of the car, and the waste would be flushed into a tank that can be emptied later. Is this story real, or do you smell a lie?*

*Real! The car maker Seres was recently granted a patent (exclusive rights to sell an invention) for its in-vehicle toilet. One of the company's goals is to turn cars into mobile living spaces, but it has not yet installed the device in any cars.

GETTY IMAGES (4); GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3)

Editor's note

I am always impressed by the children who compete in the Scripps National Spelling Bee (p2). By the time they reach the nationals, which this year were held in Washington, DC, they have spelled many difficult words. But in the final rounds, their challenge has just begun as their knowledge is put to an incredible test. Each time I watch a student walk up to the microphone to give an answer, I applaud their courage and wish them well. Whether they spell the word correctly or not, they have my admiration. This year, after an intense competition that included a record-breaking spell-off round, Shrey Parikh was crowned the winner. The 14-year-old from California spelled words including *Bhubaneswar*, *Pluchea*, and *hwyl* on his way to the championship, and I had no clue about any of them! Congratulations to Shrey and to every child who entered the bee, starting at the classroom level. You're all amazing!

Andrea Barbalich
Editorial Director

CHARITY OF THE WEEK

Active Minds

This organization focuses on improving the mental health of young people. It has a network of more than 500 chapters at colleges and high schools across the US. Students can find out how to talk openly about mental health, run peer-led programs, and provide support for people who may be struggling. Find out more at activeminds.org.

active minds

Skateboarding for a purpose

Carmelo, 9, California

"I'm a skateboarder with celiac disease, which is an autoimmune disease. This makes it difficult for my body to retain nutrients from the food I eat. I was diagnosed about six months ago and am starting to feel much better after we changed my diet. About 1 in 100 people in the world have been diagnosed with celiac, but it's not very well understood. I started a skateboarding brand to raise awareness and funds to support nonprofit organizations that research the disease. We want to continue supporting research toward treatments for celiac!"

Have you done something interesting or raised money for a cause you care about? Whatever you're up to, we want to hear about it at *hello@theweekjunior.com.*

JOKE OF THE WEEK

Why can't bicycles ever pedal themselves?

They're always two-tired.

We published a book!

The Week Junior has created its first-ever bookazine (a combination of a book and a magazine). The title is _All About America_, and it celebrates this year's 250th anniversary of our nation's founding in 1776! The 100-page book is packed with fascinating facts about the amazing people, ideas, events, and landmarks that make our country special. Think of it as a road map of the American spirit! To find out more about it, have an adult go with you to magazineshop.us/theweekjunior. _All About America_ is also available at bookstores and grocery stores throughout the country.

THE WEEK Junior IT'S YOUR TURN Email your news, views, and photos to *hello@theweekjunior.com.*

Your turn

YOUR PHOTOS

We'd love to see pictures you've taken or pictures with you in them! Have an adult email them to us at *hello@theweekjunior.com*, along with anything you would like us to know about what's happening in the photo.

"I was so excited to see the baby elephant in person. She was so cute playing in the elephant house." Adalyn, 11, Virginia

"I made the vegetable miso ramen recipe for Mother's Day. It was one of the best soups I've ever had!" Rudy, 9, Maine

"I made the oat chocolate chip muffins. They were delicious, and my family loved them and requested that I make them again." Jordan, 9, Hawaii

Teacher OF THE WEEK

Teacher's Name: **Ms. Grissom**

School Name: **Basis Tucson North**

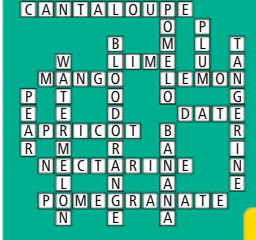
"Ms. Grissom is an outstanding teacher. She makes class engaging and brings science to life in a way that is exciting. Ms. Grissom celebrates our successes and encourages us to keep trying even when we make mistakes. She always says to try again. Ms. Grissom ensures that everyone understands the lessons and feels included in discussions and activities."

Izzi, 10, Arizona

Nominate your teacher for Teacher of the Week!
Send your reason for the nomination, a photo of your teacher, and your school's name and address to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: COURTESY ACTIVE MINDS

Puzzle answers (from page 26)



Take five
swing
mound
catch
throw
plate

All the same
1. manga
2. Tubman
3. romantic
4. salamander
5. *The Mandalorian*

4	5	3	6	2	1
1	6	2	4	5	3
5	2	4	3	1	6
6	3	1	2	4	5
3	4	5	1	6	2
2	1	6	5	3	4

Quiz answers (from page 30) **1** b) Methane **2** True **3** a) AC Milan **4** The Great Barrier Reef **5** c) 32 **6** False. The debris was from a weather balloon. **7** Modern pentathlon **8** b) Saxophone **9** EDGE **10** False. Miroslav Klose scored the most World Cup goals. **11** a) Apollo XL **12** c) Teeth **13** True **14** Gorotama **15** a) Guacamole

We want to hear from you! To have your letters, photos, nominations, recommendations, or ideas considered for inclusion in the magazine, please include your first name, age, and state with your submission. By emailing your submission to us, you give *The Week Junior* consent to publish it in the magazine and online. Please get your parent/guardian's permission before sending anything to us.

How much of this week's news can you remember?

1 What harmful gas do cows famously release when they burp?

a) Ozone b) Methane

c) Carbon monoxide

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

2 True or false? This year, an album by Taylor Swift was added to the National Recording Registry for the first time.

True ☐ False ☐

3 US Men's National Team star Christian Pulisic usually plays for which club soccer team?

a) AC Milan b) Juventus c) Roma

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

4 Activist Diamond Spratling's new book was inspired by what coral reef?

5 How many words did Shrey Parikh correctly spell in the spell-off round of this year's National Spelling Bee?

a) 22 b) 25 c) 32

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

6 True or false? Debris recovered by the US Army near Roswell, New Mexico, in 1947 came from a flying disc.

True ☐ False ☐

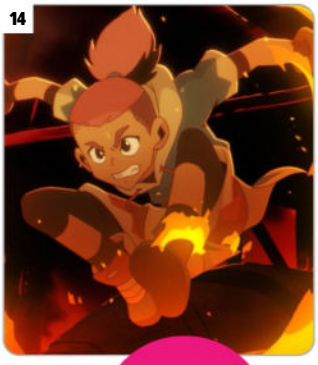
7 What event at the 2028 Summer Olympics will involve new obstacles inspired by the *Ninja Warrior* TV show?

8 Which instrument did jazz musician Sonny Rollins play?

a) Piano b) Saxophone c) Trumpet

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

1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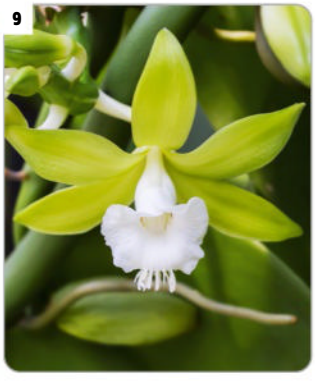
4

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

3


9

9 What is the name of the system that was recently used to identify 9,945 at-risk flowering plant species?

10 True or false? Pelé scored the most goals of any soccer player in FIFA World Cup history.

True ☐ False ☐

11 In the graphic novel *The Brainstormerz: Money Talks*, what kind of phone does Lex want?

a) Apollo XL

b) Gemini XL

c) Mercury XL

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

12 A recent study found that Neanderthals made tools out of which body part of ancient rhinoceroses?

a) Bones

b) Horns

c) Teeth

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

13 True or false? The first Pride march took place in June 1970.

True ☐ False ☐

14 What fictional sport is the focus of the new animated series *Dragon Striker*?

15 Chefs in Tancítaro, Mexico, recently made nearly 15,000 pounds of which dip?

a) Guacamole

b) Queso

c) Pico de gallo

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

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